

## **ENC 6712-01 (M) Studies in Literacy & Writing**

Thurs. 7:30-8:50 p.m.

Visual Arts Building (VAB) 107

**Dr. R. Mark Hall**

Spring 2015

**Office:** Colbourn Hall 148A  
**Hours:** Thurs. 6:30-7:30 p.m.  
& by appointment  
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### **Tentative Course Policies & Assignments**

- [Get Your Learn On](#)
- [Course Calendar](#)

### **Course Description**

This seminar is designed for graduate students in rhetoric and composition, technical writing, literature, and education, who are interested in the study of reading and writing. With an interdisciplinary approach to literacy studies, this course is also relevant to future teachers and researchers across the disciplines.

The understanding of literacy has changed enormously in recent years. Although its importance remains undoubted, literacy has emerged as a much more complex, context-dependent subject than previously thought. Reading and writing have come to be seen as pluralistic cultural practices that shape, and are shaped by, their cultural, historical, material, and political contexts. As a result, literacy studies demand interdisciplinary, comparative, critical approaches. With that in mind, this course will address the following:

- Debates about literacy, including its definition, uses, impacts, and meanings
- Historical research on literacy
- Relationships between literacy and social class, generation, ethnicity, gender, and geography
- Ethnographic studies of literacies in everyday life
- Literacy learning, both in school and out
- Literacy and individual, social, and political action
- Literacies in popular culture
- Digital literacies and new media
- Literacy research designs and methodologies

This course invites you not only to study the literacy research of others, but also to become, on a small scale, a literacy researcher yourself. In addition to discussing and writing about assigned reading, you will design a literacy research study of your own, applying course material and additional sources you gather to your inquiry.

## Learning Goals

- Articulate and trace the emergence of and core intellectual movements in literacy studies.
- Identify in course texts and articulate foundational theories of writing and language in literacy studies.
- Identify and articulate teaching and classroom implications of core theories and studies of literacy.
- Study everyday reading and writing practices outside of school, gathering and analyzing relevant primary data.
- Write a research proposal to study literacy practices in a specific context.

## Required Texts

Collins, James, and Richard K. Blot. *Literacy and Literacies: Texts, Power, and Identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2003. ISBN: 0-521-59661-0.

Cushman, Ellen, Eugene R. Kintgen, Barry M. Kroll, and Mike Rose. *Literacy: A Critical Sourcebook*. Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001. 0-312-25042-8.

Delpit, Lisa. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York: The New Press, 2006. 1-59558-074-3.

Street, Brian V. *Literacy in Theory and Practice*. Cambridge, Cambridge UP, 1984. 0-521-28961-0.

Additional readings in the Webcourse. (Click on “Files” to view the “Required Readings” folder.) Print and bring a hard copy of each reading to class.

## Accommodations for Disabled Students

If you have a disability or condition, which may impair your ability to complete assignments or otherwise satisfy course requirements, please meet with me to identify, discuss, and document any feasible instructional modifications or accommodations. A student with a documented disability (e.g., physical, learning, psychiatric, vision, hearing, etc.) may arrange reasonable accommodations with UCF Student Disability Services, Ferrell Commons 7F, Room 185, 407-823-2371, TTY/TDD 407-823-2116, <http://sds.sdes.ucf.edu/>.

## Attendance & Class Participation

Since this is a graduate seminar, each of us is equally important to its success. You are expected to come to every class meeting, and to be on time. Please come to class having read all the assigned texts—usually more than once. I will occasionally ask to you write a question or a response to the assigned reading to turn in for credit, sometimes before class, sometimes during class. Because this is a course with reduced seat time (M), you will spend more time each week writing online in preparation for our limited time face-to-face. With that in mind, you

will write a detailed response to assigned readings each week, once before class and again after. Always come prepared to write and speak intelligently on the day's topics. Missed weekly discussion posts, reading responses, and in-class activities cannot be made up.

More than two absences will result in a failing class participation grade.

If you are absent for any reason, you are responsible for any modifications to the syllabus and/or assignments.

### **Distracted Learning**

You cannot learn if you are distracted. With that in mind, unless engaged in the work of the course, cell phones must be turned off during class. Your attention should be on the assigned work of the course. If you are distracted by your phone, other technology, or activity, or if you distract others, I will ask you to leave and count you absent.

### **Late Work**

Late work will incur a significant penalty.

### **Academic Integrity, Plagiarism, and Misuse of Sources**

Academic integrity is a shared responsibility at UCF. Instructors are responsible for teaching the rules and conventions of acknowledging sources in writing. Students are responsible for learning to use sources ethically and appropriately.

**Plagiarism:** The Department of Writing & Rhetoric has adopted the definition of *plagiarism* from the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA): “*In an instructional setting, plagiarism occurs when a writer deliberately uses someone else’s language, ideas, or other original (not common-knowledge) material without acknowledging its source.* This definition applies to texts published in print or online, to manuscripts, and to the work of other student writers.”

**Misuse of sources:** The WPA (and the Department of Writing & Rhetoric) distinguish *plagiarism* from *misuse of sources*: “A student who attempts (even if clumsily) to identify and credit his or her source, but who misuses a specific citation format or incorrectly uses quotation marks or other forms of identifying material taken from other sources, has not plagiarized. Instead, such a student should be considered to have failed to cite and document sources appropriately” (<http://www.wpacouncil.org/node/9>).

**Consequences of academic dishonesty:** Writing & Rhetoric takes plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty seriously and responds in accordance with UCF policy. Plagiarizing or cheating—or assisting another student who plagiarizes or cheats—may result in a failing grade on an assignment or for the entire course; a report to the Office of Student Conduct; and/or a “Z” grade, which denotes academic dishonesty on your transcript.

If you consult a source and are unsure whether you have plagiarized or misused it, discuss your concerns with me *before* submitting the assignment. If you submit an assignment for one UCF course and would like to submit it (or a similar version) for another course, you must first receive

written permission from both instructors and then appropriately cite your earlier work.

**Consult the following to learn more about academic integrity policies at UCF:**

- *Graduate Catalogue 2014-2015*:  
<http://www.graduatecatalog.ucf.edu/content/policies.aspx?id=5702>
- *The Golden Rule 2014-15 Student Handbook*, p. 20:  
<http://goldenrule.sdes.ucf.edu/>
- Z Designation for Academic Dishonesty:  
<http://z.ucf.edu/>
- Office of Student Conduct:  
<http://osc.sdes.ucf.edu/process>

### **The University Writing Center**

The Writing Center is located in 105 Colbourn Hall and provides one-to-one writing instruction for students at every level, in all majors. Trained tutors assist at all stages of the writing process, from understanding the assignment, through revision of the final draft. You may drop in, schedule an appointment online at <http://uwc.ucf.edu/>, or call for an appointment: 407-823-2197. I strongly encourage all graduate students to make use of this writing resource.

### **Conferences & Questions**

I encourage you to approach me anytime you have questions—about assignments, about my feedback on your work, about the movement of the course. If you have questions about your work, bring it to a conference and we will discuss it. If my office hours are inconvenient for you, let me know and I will arrange an alternative time to meet with you. You should have at least two conferences with me to discuss your reading and writing this term, one early in the term, and one after midterm.

### **Evaluation**

Remember, it is your work that is being evaluated, not *you*, not your potential, not your past performance in other courses. I follow UCF's grading policies, described in the current graduate catalogue: <<http://www.graduatecatalog.ucf.edu/content/Policies.aspx?id=5700>>.

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## Assignments

### Weekly “Before & After” Online Discussion Posts

25%

#### Before Class:

- In the first paragraph or so, briefly **sum up** the main points of the week’s assigned readings, identifying the central arguments and issues. If your summary works well, it will give us a clear sense of the whole of each text, even if we’ve not read it.
- Next, **identify one or two specific passages** that engage you, and explain why: Did a passage surprise you? Teach you something important? Illuminate a problem that you’ve been mulling over? Did a passage make you confused or angry? Confirm—or contradict—your beliefs or other reading you’ve done on the issue? Persuade you—or fail to persuade you—on some point?
- Finally, **pose a text-based question or two**. End with substantive questions that can act as springboards for our face-to-face class discussion of the reading: How do the passages you’ve identified add to or complicate our discussion of some central issue in the field of literacy studies, or enrich our understanding of literacy theories and practices? What arguments invite closer analysis or critique? What arguments invite comparison to other works we’ve read—particularly those assigned for the same class meeting? What issues trouble, interest, or excite you? In short, about what issues in the text would you like to hear your classmates’ insights? Push us to examine the texts more closely, to explicate particular passages, and to draw connections among assigned readings.

The purpose of these posts is to spark discussion and to help you to begin thinking and writing about topics that you may pursue in other assignments in the course. A collection of effective posts will aid you preparing for the mid-term exam.

#### After Class:

- **Respond** to at least one classmate’s “Before” post. (To ensure that everyone is included, respond to the post before yours; if you post first, then respond to the last post.) Use insights from our in-class discussion to develop your response. Demonstrate what new you’ve learned or thought about as a result of our face-to-face conversation. Most importantly, work to **synthesize**: Draw connections among assigned readings.

### Researching Everyday Literacy Practices

10%

For most of us, our understanding of literacy is based narrowly in our experiences of reading and writing in school. By contrast, this assignment is designed to help you develop a richer, more complex view of literacy by exploring literacy practices outside of school, in everyday life around you. The goals are to help you become reflective about literacy practices, to carry out a small piece of research, and to have some fun.

This assignment invites you to put a “social” theory of literacy into practice. In short, a social

view of literacy assumes that literacy is socially situated, located in a particular time and context. This approach encourages the examination of literacy practices in relation to the social institutions and power relations that sustain them. You will, of course, read more about this and other theories of literacy this semester, but one aim of this assignment is to demonstrate that you can learn a lot about literacy theory by *doing* literacy research. In Arthur N. Applebee's words, "If students are to participate effectively in a domain, they must learn how to take action within that domain: how to *do* science, for example, not simply to learn *about* it." Without much advance knowledge of literacy, let's put Applebee's notion to the test.

To begin, study carefully the four aspects of this assignment:

### 1. Inquiry

Look around you for non-school situations in which reading and writing play an integral part in human interactions and interpretive processes.

You may research any area of everyday literacy. Examples include the following: attending a baseball game; playing music; arranging a vacation; taking a bus, train, or airplane; changing one's name; getting a driver's license; getting a tattoo; attending a church service; bowling; supermarket shopping; sorting out junk mail; working at a particular job; attending a poetry slam; blogging about your favorite film; baking a cake; learning to play a video game.

### 2. Timetable

<b>Weeks 1-2:</b>	Plan a <i>small</i> piece of research on a literacy practice, either individually, or preferably with a classmate or two.
<b>Weeks 3-5:</b>	Carry out the research.
<b>Week 6:</b>	Share your research in class in 8-10 min.

### 3. Method

A social theory of literacy favors particular ways of doing research. One such method is the detailed examination of particular instances of literacy practices. Below are some steps in researching literacy practices. (You may use only some of these steps for this small project; you may, for example, ask only 3-4 questions in an interview, but propose a dozen more you *would* ask if you went on to develop this into a full-scale research project. to put it another way, do a little research now, but as you do, imagine how you might grow your project later):

- Identify a specific physical place or particular activity in which reading and writing play a significant role.
- Observe the visual environment. Keep a detailed record of what you see and hear. Document your research with video, audio, and/or photography.
- Identify particular occasions of reading and writing and document them, describing them in detail. Highlight a specific "literacy event" for analysis.

- Identify texts. Look for examples of literacy in the environment, literacy on the body, particular documents. Collect copies of texts, or photograph them.
- Analyze how--and why--texts are used. Examine interactions between people and texts. What roles do reading and writing play in human interactions and interpretive processes?
- Interview people about practices, drawing on their cultural knowledge of the setting and the literacy events that take place there to make sense of your observations. How do people involved make sense of texts in the setting you've researched? What are their attitudes and feelings about them?

#### 4. Analysis

Once you've collected your research, analyze it. You will need to look at literacy through the lens of a social view of literacy, applying some of the theoretical concepts we will read about to your particular topic. You might note, for example, particular gender roles, networks of support, power relations, forms of control, how texts circulate and who has access to them, particular theories of what literacy is, specific literacy practices, cross cultural differences, public versus private literacies, the relation to visual literacy, and so forth.

Write a short summary—no more than three pages, double-spaced—of your research findings to present to the class. Concentrate on your analysis. End with an explanation of what you've learned: what does your project reveal about the situated nature of literacy practices?

Consider developing this short project into a larger literacy research proposal.

(This assignment is adapted from David Barton's "Researching Literacy Practices: Learning From Activities With Teachers and Students" in *Situated Literacies: Reading and Writing in Context*. Students interested in choosing literacy research topics and designing literacy research projects should also see Barton's "Directions for Literacy Research: Analyzing Language and Social Practices in a Textually Mediated World" in *Language and Education*, 15. 2 & 3 (2001), a special issue devoted to issues in literacy research.)

For an example, see Street, Brian V., and Adam Lefstein. *Literacy: An Advanced Resource Book*. London: Routledge, 2007. 193-99.

See the rubric for this assignment in advance in the Webcourse.

#### Mid-Term Exam

20%

During our 8<sup>th</sup> class meeting, I'll give you an essay exam to take home and turn in during class of the 10<sup>th</sup> week. I'll offer a choice of several questions. Some questions will be straightforward, inviting you to compare one theorist to another, for example. Other questions may ask you to apply some of the theories you've read about so far to something new; I may, for instance, ask you to read and respond to an article we've not covered in class, and to analyze it from some theoretical perspectives we've read about and discussed. The primary learning goal of the

midterm is to demonstrate your ability to **synthesize** course material.

The most effective way to prepare for this exam is to complete your readings and online posts each week and to participate actively in every class. Sum up the main ideas from each of the assigned readings each week (keep up as you go)—that is, develop an annotated bibliography—and keep a record, as well, of your reactions to readings, both before and *after* class discussions: note what questions you have, what aspects seem confusing or problematic to you, what points you agree with, and how your thinking evolves based on our classroom talk.

### **Annotated Bibliography of Outside Readings**

10%

In order to develop your knowledge of literacy studies beyond the scope of assigned reading and class discussions, you will research a literacy question of your own choosing. Select carefully something that will sustain your interest throughout the term; ideally, this will become the basis of the research for your research proposal.

Summarize 4 texts that address a specific question in literacy studies—the more specific, the better. Texts may be scholarly journal articles, essays from scholarly collections, chapters from academic books (not whole books), or scholarly electronic sources. I will show you how to gather secondary literacy research in class. Come to talk with me early and often about your inquiry. If you get stuck, let me help you.

Choose a variety of texts—not, for example, all texts from the same collection, or a series of articles from a single issue of a journal. Sources must be ones that are not included among the assigned readings for the course. Check the syllabus to be sure.

Importantly, the sources you choose should not be just any four that relate to your subject. Rather, you should select your sources strategically so that, together, they work to convey a sense of the scholarly conversation about your area of inquiry.

Each item in your bibliography should begin with an appropriate MLA or APA-style citation. Summaries should be about one double-spaced page each, or 250 words. Begin by identifying the major claim of the text. Sum up the main ideas in your own words, keeping quotations brief and to a minimum. Take special care to avoid misusing sources, especially half-copying from the original. Turn in electronic copies or photocopies of each of your sources along with your annotated bibliography.

Only AFTER you have carefully summed up the whole should you add a brief explanation of how the source contributes to your understanding of the scholarly conversation concerning your subject and how the source may inform and enhance your research proposal.

Introduce your annotated bibliography with a **short essay**--about a page or two--that describes the specific question that guides your research. Speculate about why your question is important to the field of literacy studies. Draw connections among the sources in your bibliography; explain how they hang together in a scholarly conversation about your subject. In other words, make an **argument** for why you've selected your sources.

## Literacy Research Proposal

35%

The purpose of the literacy research proposal is to persuade readers that your intended study, when completed, will result in a successful piece of scholarship. It is generally 12-15 pages (not longer), plus a bibliography. The proposal is a persuasive document, whose goal is to convince readers of the following:

1. **The proposed project addresses a significant literacy issue or question.** The proposal gives a clear sense of how your research matters to the field of literacy studies. What new understanding might result from your study? What change might result from your research? What difference will it make to others working in the field? In making your case, indicate what has already been published on your subject and articulate how your project fits with and adds to that existing conversation.
2. **The proposed project is feasible.** The document demonstrates that the proposed project is well thought out and can be completed in a timely manner.

The information you include in order to achieve these goals depends, to some extent, on the nature of the study you propose. Below is a list of sections commonly found in a research proposal. These may be combined and divided as needed. Literacy research studies you will read in this course offer additional ideas and models for what to include in your proposal and how to organize it.

Likewise, study “Participant-Observation Research of a Field Site” and “Ethnographic Interviewing,” pp. 227-36 in the Project Appendix of Lindquist and Seitz’s *The Elements of Literacy* for ideas about ways to develop these two key components of a literacy study.

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### Required Parts of the Literacy Research Proposal

**Introduction** - What background information do readers need in order to understand your proposal? This section orients readers to proposal that follows.

**Articulation of the Problem or Topic** - What specific problem(s) or topic(s) will your study address? What rationale can you offer for your project? Why is this problem or topic significant? Whom will it interest? What areas will you cover and what will you exclude; in other words, what is the scope of your project? This section not only states the problem or topic, but also indicates how and why it matters to the field. In this section you should answer what is commonly called the “So what?” question.

**Specific Research Question(s)** - These should be clearly stated. What are the precise goals of your study? What specific questions will you attempt to answer? This section gives a clear sense of what your project will achieve.

**Review of Relevant Literature, with a Bibliography Appended** - What previous research is relevant to your project? How does your project relate to and move beyond what has been done by others? What gaps or dissonances have you discovered in previous research and how

will your work address them? What areas of previous research support your work? This section locates your project within existing research in the field of literacy studies. Your proposal should convince readers that your project is sufficiently connected to established work in literacy studies to be relevant to the discipline and that your project offers sufficient new knowledge to be worth pursuing.

**Plan of Research/Methods Section** - What do you propose to do in order to answer your research questions? This section shows that you have a feasible and well-thought-out research design or methodology. To make your case, specify the following in some detail:

1. **Participants** - How will you select them? What will be your relationship to participants? What will be your role as researcher?
2. **Data** - What data will you collect? Data should relate directly to specific research questions; in other words, each specific data point should answer a specific research question. You may need to refine your questions to fit available data.
3. **Data gathering methods** - How will you go about collecting data? What specific procedures will you follow?
4. **Analysis methods** - What will be your approach to analyzing data? What frameworks for analysis will you use? Here, reviewing relevant literature, you should explain critical lenses, such as “figured worlds,” “literacy sponsors,” or “distributed cognition,” which will inform your ways of making sense of your data.

You should turn in a page or so describing your topic no later than **Week 13**. We will discuss your topics in class. Also, I encourage you to meet with me individually to talk about your draft as it develops.

Using MLA or APA-style documentation, your proposal should cite **6-10 relevant academic sources**. (Ideally, these will come from your annotated bibliography.) Your proposal should show an awareness of the focus and content of this class; it should reflect both original analysis and an awareness of relevant scholarship, and it should use the vocabulary of literacy studies with precision and accuracy.

A complete draft of your proposal will be due **Week 15** for peer responses; you are responsible for making your draft available to your classmates. You are also responsible for giving thoughtful, detailed written responses to your peers concerning their drafts, and for collecting their responses to turn in with your final revision during final exam week.

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